Cancer Waiting Times in NHSScotland

1 October to 31 December 2019
A National Statistics publication for Scotland
Publication date: 31 March 2020

About this release

This release by Information Services Division (ISD) presents the quarterly update of Cancer Waiting Times statistics. It reports on the two waiting times standards used to measure how long patients have waited for their first cancer treatment. Data for the quarter ending December 2019 are presented by NHS Board, Regional Cancer Network and cancer type.

Main Points

The 62-day standard states that 95% of eligible patients will wait a maximum of 62 days from referral to first cancer treatment.

- 83.7% of patients started treatment within the 62-day standard, compared to 83.3% in the previous quarter, and 82.7% for quarter ending December 2018.
- The 62-day standard was met by three NHS Boards: NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Shetland, and NHS Tayside. For the Boards that did not meet the standard, performance ranged from 72.4% (NHS Highland) to 92.8% (NHS Borders).

The 31-day standard states that 95% of all patients will wait no more than 31 days from decision to treat to first cancer treatment.

- 96.5% of patients started treatment within the 31-day standard, compared with 95.8% in the previous quarter and 94.9% for quarter ending December 2018.
- The 31-day standard was met by 13 NHS Boards and Golden Jubilee National Hospital. The Board that did not meet the standard was NHS Grampian (92.8%).

NHSScotland performance against the 62-day and 31-day standards
Background

In October 2008, the Scottish Government published Better Cancer Care - An Action Plan. The statements in the Action Plan formed the basis for the current standards for cancer waiting times where 95% of all eligible patients should wait no longer than 31 or 62 days. The 5% tolerance level was applied to these targets as, for some patients, it may not have been clinically appropriate for treatment to begin within target. In March 2016, the Scottish Government published Beating Cancer: Ambition and Action.

ISD works in partnership with the Scottish Government Cancer Performance Support Team and NHS Boards to measure NHS Scotland’s performance against the National Standards and to provide a wide range of users with faster access to the statistics they need.

The 62-day standard applies to patients urgently referred with a suspicion of cancer by a primary care clinician, screened positive patients referred through a national cancer screening programme, and, direct referrals to hospital where the signs and symptoms are consistent with the cancer diagnosed as per the Scottish Referral Guidelines e.g. self-referral to A&E.

The 31-day standard applies to all patients, regardless of the route of referral.

The standards are based on the 10 main cancer types: breast, cervical, colorectal, head & neck, lung, lymphoma, ovarian, melanoma, upper gastro-intestinal (hepato-pancreato-biliary and oesophago-gastric), and urological (prostate, bladder, other).

Golden Jubilee National Hospital is only reported against the 31-day standard since they do not refer patients but are involved in the treatment stage.

The figures presented use patient level data taken as a snapshot (on 28 February 2020). Please see News and Updates section of our website for more details.

Contact

Cavan Gallagher, Information Analyst
0141 282 2061
cavan.gallagher@nhs.net

Amy McKeon, Principal Information Analyst
0131 275 6559
amy.mckeon@nhs.net

Further Information

Find out more in the full report which includes the metadata document in the appendices. The data from this publication is available to download from our web page as well as from the Open Data website. For more information on Cancer Waiting Times see the Cancer Waiting Times section of our website. The next release of this publication will be 30 June 2020. In May 2018, the Scottish Government published a Clinical Review of Cancer Waiting Times Standards in Scotland.

NHS Performs

A selection of information from this publication is included in NHS Performs. NHS Performs is a website that brings together a range of information on how hospitals and NHS Boards within NHSScotland are performing.

ISD and Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Further information about our statistics.